

10/04/2004 This Week In Congress

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October 4, 2004

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Addressing the Kansas City Agribusiness Council

On Monday, I met with around 70 members of the Kansas City Agribusiness Council. The group is comprised of area agriculture business leaders. This speech allowed me to discuss the importance of agriculture in Kansas.

Agriculture is the backbone of the Kansas economy. Bringing rural and urban interests together is important for the future of agriculture within our state. This discussion underscored how dependent these two groups are on each other and why we must continue to work together for the betterment of agriculture.

Working to Reduce Methamphetamine Use

Methamphetamine is a dangerous drug that has infiltrated many of our communities, especially in rural America. The drug is cheap and easy to produce because it uses products, including cold and allergy medicines, that are easily accessible from many retail stores. Kansas law enforcement, state agencies and community retailers have worked together to reduce the use and manufacture of this drug and have had much success, but it remains a threat.

This week, I joined other members of Congress in urging the Drug Enforcement Administration to conduct a comprehensive review of our nation's drug control laws and programs. The review will determine what changes need to be made to the system and whether federal legislation is necessary to strengthen drug control laws. I am interested in learning more about common sense federal initiatives that would reduce meth production without burdening our retailers and restricting the legal use of these drugs.

A few years ago, I brought the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime to Salina in order for Congress to get a better understanding of the seriousness of this drug on our communities. I have also brought in the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency to meet with law enforcement officials and continue to work within the Methamphetamine Caucus in the House of Representatives to ensure that our law enforcement officials have the tools necessary to combat this drug.

Although tremendous strides have been made in stopping the rapid rise of meth abuse in Kansas, the drug is still out there, threatening our children and communities. More needs to be done, and I will continue to work to find additional funding and strengthen meth prevention, rehabilitation, enforcement, and prosecution efforts in Kansas.

Protecting Marriage

On Thursday, I voted in favor of the Federal Marriage Amendment, which stated that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. I heard from many Kansans on this issue, and I appreciate knowing the concerns of Kansans.

The amendment did not receive the super-majority of two-thirds vote necessary to amend the Constitution. Despite this, the vote provided a valuable opportunity for Members to discuss the legal, religious and social significance of protecting traditional marriage. Forty-four states, including Kansas, have enacted laws that provide that marriage shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. I will continue to work to protect the institution of marriage and preserve Kansas values.

Meeting with Agriculture Officials for Update on World Trade Organization

On Wednesday, I joined members of the House Agriculture Committee in a meeting with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick and Agriculture Under Secretary J.B. Penn.

They updated the committee on negotiations ongoing in response to accusations by Brazil and other countries' objections to U.S. cotton subsidies. However, these countries have been unable to support their attacks with any evidence proving that the cotton programs in the 2002 Farm Bill are consistent with World Trade Organization requirements.

Cotton is emerging as a major crop within Kansas, and I will continue working to ensure that these producers have their voices heard within these negotiations. We cannot allow foreign countries to dictate agriculture policy for Kansas farmers.

Congress Extends Transportation Programs

On Thursday, the House and Senate passed legislation that will extend funding for federal transportation programs for the next eight months, including funding for Kansas infrastructure needs. Currently, Kansas ranks fourth in the nation in the number of public roads and third in the number of bridges.

It is important that Congress make progress on this essential piece of legislation because the eight month extension will allow members of the House and Senate time to continue working on the comprehensive six-year transportation reauthorization while continuing to fund existing programs.

I will continue working to see that the transportation bill meets the needs of Kansans and improves our highways safety and infrastructure.

Visiting Fort Leavenworth

This week, I was able to tour Fort Leavenworth. I have been spending time touring the four military installations in Kansas because people in Washington, D.C. need to understand how important the mission of the military is to our state and nation. It is especially important during the ongoing Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) hearings that are currently being held.

It is estimated that Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley, McConnell Air Force Base and Forbes Field in Topeka collectively pump \$2 billion into the Kansas economy on an annual basis. It is critical that these installations remain open for our national defense. Whether it is training the next round of soldiers to support our war efforts in Iraq or Afghanistan or defending our skies, Kansas provides a critical role in the War on Terror and will continue to do so in the future.

Visiting Washington County and Bern

On Friday, I joined community leaders in Washington to take part in the dedication ceremony for the Washington County Memorial Airport. The ceremony marked the completion of a major expansion for the airfield and provided me with an opportunity to meet with local residents to celebrate this achievement.

In Bern I met with local banker Jim Sheik, who joined me during my visit. While in Bern, I was able to meet with residents at the grocery store, bank, lumber yard, cafe and post office.

Visiting Quinter

On Saturday, I visited Quinter and spoke with residents about a number of issues, including drought assistance and the lack of moisture, the prescription drug bill, the Presidential debates and the struggling farm economy. The issues that I heard about in Quinter largely reflect what I hear about when traveling within the district. It is important that I focus on these issues because many of them go to the very heart of rural survival. I appreciated hearing from the residents of Quinter and will take their advice back with me as we debate these issues in Congress.

In the Office

University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway of Lawrence was in the office this week to discuss securing grant funding for work that will be done at the new Transportation Research Institution at the university. The KU Department of Engineering has recently undergone a major new expansion and construction of a new facility and is on the path toward developing a nationally recognized center for transportation research. Rod Bradshaw from Jetmore was in to discuss agriculture issues, while Eric Sexton from Wichita State University was in to discuss issues facing higher education. Gerry and Lou Winget from Wichita were in the office representing the Kansans with Addictions Prevention Association.

Carol and Lowell Tawney from Lane were in the office representing the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, to discuss spending for research and public awareness of ovarian cancer. Diane Michaud from Meadowlark Hospice in Clay Center, Sandy Kuhlman from Hospice Services Incorporated in Phillipsburg and Karren Weichert from Topeka Hospice were in the office to discuss health care issues. LaTonya Miller from the U.S. National Park Service in Topeka was in the office to introduce herself and talk about the issues facing the National Park Service. Also in the office was Jerold Harris from

Wichita, who visited the office prior to his testifying before the House Agriculture Sub committee on Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research. Harris was testifying on behalf of Farm Credit, an agriculture lending institution.

In for a tour of the U.S. Capitol were Jack Rathbun of Ellsworth and his daughter, Susie Carney of Andover.

Very truly yours,

Jerry